

**To:** City Executive Board  
**Date:** Monday 16<sup>th</sup> October 2017  
**Report of:** Patsy Dell, Head of Planning, Sustainable Development and Regulatory Services  
**Title of Report:** North Oxford Victorian Suburb Conservation Area appraisal

<b>Summary and recommendations</b>	
<b>Purpose of report:</b>	To present the conservation area appraisal for North Oxford Victorian Suburb to Board for approval
<b>Key decision:</b>	No
<b>Executive Board Member:</b>	Councillor Alex Hollingsworth, Board Member for Planning and Regulatory Services
<b>Corporate Priority:</b>	A vibrant and sustainable economy Meeting housing needs Strong and active communities
<b>Policy Framework:</b>	NPPF Section 12 Oxford Local Plan 2001-2016 Core Strategy 2006-2026
<b>Recommendation(s): That the City Executive Board resolves to:</b>	
1.	<b>Approve</b> the North Oxford Victorian Suburb Conservation Area appraisal (appended to this report) and endorse it for use in informing development management and planning policy decisions
2.	<b>Endorse</b> the conservation principles it promotes and its key conclusions

<b>Appendices</b>	
Appendix 1	North Oxford Victorian Suburb Conservation Area Appraisal
Appendix 2	North Oxford Victorian Suburb Conservation Area appraisal: summary and response to the consultation feedback
Appendix 3	Boundary Map
Appendix 4	Risk Register

## **Introduction and background**

1. The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 states that areas of special architectural or historic interest, within which it is desirable to preserve the character or appearance of the area, should be designated as conservation areas.
2. The North Oxford Victorian Suburb was designated as a Conservation Area between 1968 and 1976. This designation reflects the unique character of the area and its significant architectural and historical interest. A plan showing the boundary of the conservation area is attached at Appendix 3.
3. Guidance from the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and Historic England recommend that designated conservation areas should undergo a formal character appraisal to justify their original designation, to define their significance and values, and to inform decisions regarding future change.
4. A draft conservation area appraisal was considered by CEB in February 2017. This draft was endorsed by CEB as the basis for public consultation. The formal consultation ended on the 28<sup>th</sup> April 2017. The conservation area appraisal has been revised in light of the comments received during that consultation.
5. Disappointingly the City Council has had to commission two sets of consultants to produce this conservation area appraisal which has unfortunately impacted upon the overall time it has taken to complete the piece of work. Notwithstanding that, the work is now close to completion and ready to move to adoption, subject to Member approval.

### **Character Appraisal**

6. North Oxford Victorian Suburb Conservation Area is a substantial, mainly residential area lying to the north of the historic core of Oxford. The interest of the area lies in its containment and consistency. The land ownership from the 16<sup>th</sup> century into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and the topography, enabled the area to be laid out as a planned suburb. A small number of architects were responsible for most of the buildings in the area which has resulted in the area having distinctive qualities such as large gardens, wide streets and substantial vegetation.
7. The appraisal (attached to this report as Appendix 1) defines the elements that contribute to the special character of North Oxford Victorian Suburb Conservation Area and highlights the areas of significance and associated vulnerabilities together with brief potential enhancement opportunities. The fieldwork which helped form the appraisal was undertaken using our Character Assessment Toolkit.

### **Consultation**

8. Preparation of the consultation draft North Oxford Victorian Suburb Conservation Area Appraisal involved engagement with residents' associations, members of the public, ward councillors and local institutions.
9. The early work on the conservation area appraisal involved meetings with key stakeholders, including both institutions based in the area as well as recognised residents groups, and public meetings. This early work, mainly led by the Conservation Studio, fed into the work undertaken by Artemis Heritage Services who produced the consultation draft, and the final version.

10. The combined feedback from both the formal and informal consultations gives a comprehensive summary of opinions and comments from a wide range of interest groups. The feedback represents the views of the educational institutions in the area as well as residents and highlights some tension between them in terms of their interest in the area. It was crucial that all these interests were well represented in the consultation in order to achieve a well-balanced range of feedback on which action can be taken.
11. Although some respondents expressed concerns about the draft appraisal in the most recent consultation period, these concerns represented an opportunity to address potential issues with the appraisal at the draft phase of the project. The concerns were addressed by the consultants (Appendix 2), and recommendations made for actions to address them. The issues addressed range from presentational issues to desires for clarification on certain issues, such as the distinction between back-land and back garden development, and have subsequently been addressed in the final draft.
12. Some of the concerns advanced by respondents cannot be addressed in the conservation area appraisal as these stem from a misunderstanding as to this document's purpose. A conservation area appraisal is, as the name suggests, purely an appraisal of the area. Some of the issues raised could be addressed in a future management plan if and when the Council had the resources to prioritise undertaking one.
13. A summary of the public comments received, and the response to these comments is attached as Appendix 2.

### **Financial implications**

14. The appraisal provides an analysis of the existing conservation area and justifies its designation. The evidence contained within the conservation area appraisal will be used by planning and conservation officers in the course of their day to day work. No financial implications are anticipated beyond the existing considerations of conservation areas in handling planning applications.
15. The design costs of publishing the final version of the Conservation Area appraisal will be met from existing budgets.

### **Legal issues**

16. The appraisal will become part of the evidence base for planning policies and will represent a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.
17. Section 71 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 places a general duty on local authorities from time to time to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of any parts of their areas which are Conservation Areas.
18. The appraisal will become part of the evidence base for planning policies and will represent a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.

### Level of risk

19. There is not considered to be any material risk involved in approving the draft appraisal for consultation. The risk register is attached at Appendix 4.

### Equalities impact

20. Consultation was carried out on a draft of the conservation area appraisal. The consultation met the requirements of the Statement of Community Involvement for Planning and had due regard to meeting the needs prescribed in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010. The consultation was structured in order to avoid differentiation between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

### Conclusion

21. A Local Planning Authority's justification for designation, as reflected in the assessment of the area's special interest, its character and appearance, is a factor which the Council and the Secretary of State will take into account when exercising functions under the planning legislation concerning buildings and land within the relevant conservation area.

22. A Conservation Area appraisal for the North Oxford Victorian Suburb has been prepared with the full involvement of the local community. It should provide assistance to all participants in the development process by identifying aspects of heritage significance and providing an authoritative point of reference.

23. The Committee is recommended to approve the conservation area appraisal.

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**Background Papers:** None